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ABSTRACT

As the world has moved from the industrial age to a technology-based society in which individual and societal competence is paramount, the focus of educational systems must shift from the basic ABC's to Competency-Based Education (CBE). Educational priorities must be continually revised to meet competitive and ever-changing workplace demands and student performance must be assessed on specific, employer-determined competencies. The new paradigm for CBE comes, in part, from the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS), which identified five necessary skill competencies for effective workers (i.e., allocating resources, interpersonal skills, acquiring and using information, understanding social and organizational systems, and being able to select and apply technology) and the following three foundation skills: (1) basic skills, such as reading, writing, and arithmetic; (2) thinking skills, including creative thinking, reasoning, and problem-solving; and (3) personal qualities related to responsibility, self-esteem, and sociability. For the past few years, technical and community colleges have been cooperatively defining what needs to be learned to perform specific jobs or tasks and to what level for specific job titles based on the CBE paradigm. To ensure that specific competencies are imparted to all students, teachers should improve their understanding of the learning process and such theories of instructional effectiveness as learning styles theory, learning domains theory, and Bloom's Taxonomy of learning and evaluation modes. Contains 15 references. (AJL)

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"ABC--ME TEACHER, YOU STUDENT!"

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THIS PAPER IS AN ORIGINAL MONOGRAPH WHICH HAS BEEN PREPARED FOR THE ACADEMY OF LEGAL STUDIES IN BUSINESS PACIFIC NORTHWEST REGION ANNUAL MEETING, VANCOUVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA, SATURDAY, APRIL 20, 1996. THE AUDIENCE FOR WHICH THIS PAPER IS PREPARED IS THE BUSINESS LAW EDUCATORS IN ATTENDANCE FROM CANADA AND THE UNITED STATES.

INTRODUCTION

This paper is an overview of a change now occuring in our American educational system. From the ABC's and industrial age of yesterday, we have moved into a technological age, world-wide-web, in which individual and societal competence is paramount today. Competence on-the-job which can be taught in a classroom, and the assessments used to verify a learner's degree of skill and/or knowledge, are now essential elements of instructional effectiveness in many educational settings in the United States. In the 1990s, our survival as teachers to work beyond the end of this century, requires that what we teach must be competency-based upon meeting the needs of American employers. More important for the employer, employee, and educator than academic grading/bell curves, is a student-employee's future job performance. And, if we are to survive as a country in a global workplace and a society, then as a nation we must continually revise our educational priorities to meet the competitive and everchanging workplace demands. To accomplish this enormous challenge we must assess student performance based on specific, and sometimes precise, requirements as determined by employers.

This message to further change educational priorities comes, in part, from the collective voice of employers and educators working in partnership. Although this partnership is new for many in our educational system, it has been a cornerstone of vocational education in this country for decades.[1] (It began with agricultural programs and land grant colleges, e.g. Washington State University in Pullman, Washington, and has expanded over the decades to include the areas of home and family life, technical trades, industrial trades, health occupations, and business occupations. Vocational education has been able to be responsive to the technological revolution we are currently in the midst of, because employers routinely communicate with us about what they need their employees to be able to do on-the-job and vocational educators across the country have continually modified student training to meet those exacting job needs at least every three years.)

The partnership approach taken has already been implemented in kindergarten-12th grade school systems in the United States, e.g. Dr. Bill Carter, Director of Curriculum for South Carolina's School District of Pickens County and the Michelin Tire Company where the employer has agreed with the district to only hire high school graduates with a diploma thus assuring both the employer and district that academic and vocational standards are met for employment and graduation. And yet there is still the remaining portion of our educational system, where the partnership of employers and educators is only beginning to appear in our two- and four-year colleges and universities, e.g. Eastern Washington University in Cheney, Washington, applies modes of assessment.[2]

COMPETENCY BASED-EDUCATION

As educators, and in order for this transition to competency-based education (CBE) to move forward, we must be practical and unselfish by placing the vocations of employers and their employees before our preferences and biases[3]. Every course we teach will need to meet the specific needs of the jobs which students desire to secure following completion of training. This change, on the part of educators such as ourselves, is one of a number necessary if our country is to successfully move into the next century. This means that education as we dole it out now, will no longer be dispensed as in the past. Rather, education has become the means to an end of sorts, e.g. jobs for competently qualified individuals, by which the present gulf is being spanned and we are the people on the front lines making many of the changes. And we are in the right place at the right time to be ambassadors within our profession to our students as customers and employers as our bosses.

As ambassadors of this crucial change we are at the frontier of our country's future to breach the gulf from the ABC's to CBE[4]. The progress being made, as you may sense, is not necessarily with the same old bandaids used by the same old folks

in the same old ways. There has also been change in how we think about and model our entire educational system. A new educational paradigm (modeled somewhat after vocational education) now exists to work hand-in-hand with the rapidly changing workplace needs of our nation's employers. The new paradigm of CBE comes, in part from, the America 2000 Report of 1991 from the U.S. Department of Labor. Their SCANS Commission (Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills) was composed of representatives of schools, businesses, unions, and government [and] identified the necessary skills to be achieved in American education.[5]

SECRETARY'S COMMISSION ON ACHIEVING NECESSARY SKILLS

In their report, the five necessary skill competencies in the workplace which effective workers can productively use are:

1) resources (allocating time, money, materials, space, and staff);

2) interpersonal skills (working on teams, teaching others, serving customers, leading, negotiating, and working well with people of diverse backgrounds);

3) information (acquiring and evaluating data, organizing and maintaining files, interpreting and communicating, and using computers to process information);

4) systems (understanding social, organizational, and technological systems, monitoring and correcting performance, and designing or improving systems); and

5) technology (selecting equipment and tools, applying technology to specific tasks, and maintaining and troubleshooting technologies).[6]

The opportunity for the development by students of specific competencies in a competency-based college setting is believed to better prepare students as future employees. For example, teambuilding and leadership development can be a designated course of study addressed daily in a technical college setting, e.g. Business Leadership. As compared to college or university lecture rooms seating as many as 200 students a few hours a week in which a small number of students choose to actively participate (and there is limited, if any, student-to-student interaction while the balance of students can and often do remain silent). Whether in a technical college, community college, college, or university all of this needs a foundation on which to based.

The foundation skills identified in the SCANS Report can and has been adopted by school districts across America and is composed of:

1) basic skills (reading, writing, arithmetic and mathematics, speaking, and listening),

2) thinking skills (thinking creatively, making decisions, solving problems, seeing things in the mind's eye, knowing how to learn, and reasoning), and

3) personal qualities (individual responsibility, self-esteem, sociability, self-management, and integrity).

In combination, the five competencies and three foundation skills, are what has been and still is needed by every student for solid job performance.[7] For example, SCANS states that for "...the high-pressure world of a major law firm as an example of how competence is required across the board:

1) Receptionists are expected to demonstrate personable "front desk" skills (meeting clients and identifying their needs) and to manage complex telecommunications systems without difficulty.

2) Secretaries are routinely called on to work with associates and partners with different, often difficult, working styles and to manipulate computer-based data, graphics, and information systems on different kinds of equipment.

3) Associates (junior attorneys) having spent three years learning the rudiments of the legal system and its precedents stretching back to common law, are now expected to put that knowledge to work on specialized problems situated in complex modern systems, e.g. corporations, hospitals, contracts, or civil rights law, and to search for precedents supporting the client's legal position.

4) The Managing Partner is responsible for ensuring that the cogs and gears of the entire firm operate as a harmonious system--that the support sytem meets the demands the firm places on it; that the accounting and finance systems follow and recover costs; that the background of the lawyers meshes with the legal specialty of the firm; and that potentially profitable new areas of client interest can be accommodated."[8]

As a dynamic society and to meet the many challenges facing us, we in the United States have already determined that we need

to do some things. What is necessary in American education, as opposed to what would be nice, has been achieved to the partial satisfaction of some groups at this time. Yet many people, from all places in our diverse society, are continuing to debate this question and others about what to do just to meet the needs of the American education system. For example, the governors of at least 45 states and dozens of executives from the nation's largest corporations met for an educational summit in March of this year in New York State[9] to discuss our educational system. As well, school districts across the country have been meeting since 1991, and also the U.S. Department of Education to discuss academic standards[10], either national or local. While talk is important and necessary, some educational institutions along with their educators have taken action by implementing, at all levels in our educational system, the paradigm of CBE.

COMPETENCY

In technical and community colleges, employers in partnership with educators for a few years have been cooperatively defining in detail what needs to be learned to do a job/task and to what level for different job titles employing a CBE paradigm.[11] This effort has been made based upon specific criteria provided and then approved by the employer, industry, or profession, of the competencies written by the educator for each job training position and course. Each of the individual competencies is usually a short sentence of what a student, and future employee, must to be able to do after a period of time studying a subject. Also, the number of competencies for a course and their characteristics varies (from a time limit of five minutes or 60 course hours, a speed in keyboarding of 75 words-a-minute = wam, a precision tolerance of .001, etc). And, all of the competencies for all of the courses in a program of training when met to the stated level validates a student's learning, e.g. 75 wam keyboarding speed, etc.

As a result the interaction between the teacher and student is now a more pivotal one in the educational process because of the learning-employment activity itself taking place in any classroom prior to the worksite. As such, teachers need to increase their comprehension of the learning process as an activity because students, and all of us, learn in a variety of ways. In order for students to learn, in the classroom and later earn on the job, teachers need to make use of the andragogy[12] available on learning styles theory[13]. Consequently, using learning styles theory teachers must vary the manner in which material or information leading to a competency is presented to interact with students' multiple learning styles. These styles individually may include listening to a lecture, reading a text, viewing a video, watching a demonstration, auditory, visual, and kinesthetics learning modes among others. Presenting the same material in more than one learning style is vital if the greatest number of students possible are to learn and achieve success

through a course (and program of study). The variety of learning styles permits greater possibilities and combinations of variables for teachers to develop assessment devices, e.g. tests, portfolios, etc.

ASSESSMENT

Student success is measured by assessment, or evaluation, of how and/or to what level a competency needed to be accomplished in a classroom setting. The assessments evaluating student work will also vary with the industry requirements, educator's creativity, and students' learning styles. Hence, the mastery of competencies by a student, tells a prospective employer of a student's ability assessed to that profession's standards to perform a job (at an educational institution the employers, or their representative's, are then in close contact with). In a CBE setting, the most valuable tool available to an instructor is the work performed at a worksite of a profession, e.g. in a law office of the legal profession preparation of pleadings and legal papers, setting up new client files, etc. which can be introduced and taught to students of how to keyboard specialized documents and organize client records.

For example, in my Legal Administrative Assistant Program training legal secretaries, receptionists, and word processors, a Business Law course competency is to "list the procedures for organizing a corporation or partnership".[14] This one competency, which is job specific to the legal profession, can be assessed for the variety of student learning styles with a quiz, test, group role play, fill-in form, a short answer question, oral answer in class, portfolio of items, etc. A key factor in the process of CBE is that the student knows at the outset what competencies of a legal secretary are expected by the legal profession and can work towards them in each course, thus clearly measuring their own accrual of skills and/or knowledge during a course and a program of training as a whole. This is but one of the products for students of the new paradigm of CBE.

The product for educators and employers is that they can see what is working in a classroom, what needs to be tinkered with in a classroom by objectively viewing student achievement, and continue their dialogue for the betterment of all participants and our country. For educators and employers in partnership to bring about this wave of change with hundreds of students, however, requires instructional effectiveness. The three theories of instructional effectiveness to be introduced next are also tools for the teacher to meaningfully, efficiently, and successfully communicate with all students (and will be presented in abbreviated forms for this audience).

LEARNING STYLES THEORY

A necessary, primary step for any teacher in the process of developing a repertoire of instructional effectiveness skills is to learn how s/he, the teacher, learns. Is it from concepts, details, alone, and/or in a group? Is it by auditory, visual, and/or kinesthetics means? The answers to these questions are reflections of one's learning style. Note that everybody has a learning style and there is no right or wrong one. And, we all have a primary style we learn by and supporting styles all of which can be more effectively applied and developed with practice.

The four learning styles in which we can find ourselves are:

1) Field Dependent (FD=concept-oriented learner),
2) Field Independent (FI=detail-oriented learner),
3) Introvert (I=single learner and thoughtful), and
4) Extrovert (E=group learner and verbal).[15]

These four styles commonly pair up as FI & I and FD & E. Some pairs, such as FI and FD may have numerical extremes (2 and 16 or vice versa) or be nearly evenly apportioned (7 and 9), as can I and E. Whatever the combination, it is your best way of processing information when in a learning mode.

LEARNING DOMAINS THEORY

There are two additional areas of theory which are essential for instructor effectiveness. First is the knowledge of the three learning domains:

1) cognitive-intellectual processes,
2) affective-emotional processes, and
3) psychomotor-physical processes.[16]

Each of these three types of processes can be applied by the teacher singly or in combination when preparing questions, topics of discussion, report assignments, etc..for students, either oral or written, to elicit responses. Cognitive processes include the ability to recall, comprehension of concepts, applications or principles, and analysis of ideas. For example, 'Explain the concept of...' Affective processes are personal values, beliefs, attitudes, emotions, motivation, and interests. An example would be, 'Which do you think is better and why?' And psychomotor processes are physical performance, finely coordinated movements, and nonverbal communication through body movement and expression. Here a common example can be writing the answer, although a dramatization, or making a collage would be better.

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BLOOM'S TAXOMONY

The last area of theory is the knowledge and understanding of Bloom's Taxomony[17] for application in a CBE environment. Bloom's approach places from highest to lowest the most difficult to the least difficult steps of learning and evaluation modes.

	BLOOM'S TAXONOMY LEVELS	QUESTION USAGE	EXAMPLES
Most Difficult	Evaluation Synthesis	Test Questions	Choose and why? Which is better?
	Analysis Application	Test, assignment or quiz questions	Why or compare? How do...?
Least Difficult	Comprehension Knowledge	Basic learning from lecture or reading, or quiz questions, e.g. yes/no, T/F, fill-in blanks	Explain "x" List steps Why are?

The ideal evaluation tool constructed by an instructor would include questions from all six levels of Bloom's Taxonomy, involve one or more domain theories in each question (as possible given the subject matter) and respond to various learning styles. Such a composite evaluation instrument would offers all students the opportunity for success at whatever their level and/or learning style. Admittedly, this is a time-consuming learning and writing process for an instructor, yet the benefits for student learning is worthy of the effort and for the employing industry. Also, as an instructor's ability to integrate these three processes--learning styles, learning domains, and Bloom's Taxomony--matures, so can the instructor gain a better overall comprehension of the same old subject matter as a consequence of having applied to it these other learning theory perspectives for CBE.

CONCLUSIONS

For an instructor there is value in having acquired these additional tools and knowing that s/he can transition more easily into CBE. Secondly, while you as an instructor may grasp only a portion of the styles-domains-taxomony at this time, you are capable of being proactive to that extent. Also, you are contributing today to the American educational system and the solution of CBE. Fourth, by knowing and understanding your learning style as a teacher-learner you can compare your experience with and appreciate why some students do and do not

perform well in class. And, you are providing a classroom learning environment for more of your students to achieve their goals more often in more courses (yours and others) as well as in their chosen vocations. Finally, employers who hire your students can rely upon these same people as employees to do the job/task as trained in a classroom setting for which the employer and teacher have collaborated as partners; because working together--educators, employers, and student-employees--the sum of the whole will be much greaterand more valuable to individuals and our society than the parts.

The last step for this morning is for you to complete a Learning Sampler[18], (just as you can have your students do during your first class sessions). Then crunch the numbers and see for yourself what your learning style is. As well, you can begin to see, when compared to other learning styles, where you can make changes in your presentations to the betterment of your student's education (based upon your students' learning styles' sampler numbers). The tool for your instructional effectiveness to improve is in your hands; and with it you are now empowered to better ensure every student's assessed success in the paradigm of CBE--and you'll probably still have a teaching job in the 21st Century, too!

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